

I am submitting testimony in regards to the proposed state cuts of 59 million from the DDS budget to developmental services.

21 years ago I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl named Amanda. Amanda unfortunately sustained a stroke in utero. This event left her both physically and developmentally disabled. For the last 21 years Amanda has required assistance with all activities of daily living. She uses a wheel chair, wears a diaper and has poor communication skills. She has undergone several orthopedic and neuro surgeries. Her father Scott and I have provided all her care while both working full time.

She currently attends Aces Whitney High East and will be graduating in June. Through this transition process I have received mixed messages. I have been told to proceed like the funding is there for day services; however we should have a plan "B". A plan "B"?!! What plan "B". Just the thought of her having nothing after 21 has me up at night. What will I do I need to work; her father can't physically care for her all day. Several years back my husband was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease making it physically difficult for him to continue his career as a carpenter. I have been working 2 jobs to provide for my family and provide care for her. Services for her to continue past her 21<sup>st</sup> year are necessary not optional.

As parents we have been told over the years by DDS that there will be programming after her 21st birthday, however these budget cuts will directly impact programming for her future. Knowing that she may not have funding for day program is alarming. I can't even imagine her having to be placed on yet another DDS waiting list! Years ago we placed her on the so called waiting list for residential knowing that she would not be eligible until adulthood. I never thought that I would have to wait for my death or incapacitation for her to receive this.

Amanda is an individual who will never go to college, financially support herself or live independently without supports. The impacts of funding cuts on my daughter and us as caregivers will be devastating. She is a young adult who needs structure, social and community interactions with peers, and time to be independent from her family. She has sat back and watched many childhood peers as well as her sister Haley move onto college and adulthood. Doesn't she have the right to move onto adulthood too? I can't help but feel that because her needs are greater that she is being discriminated against.

I am not only speaking to day on behalf of my family but countless others unable to be here. Families who already have great challenges will suffer emotionally and financially.

I am also speaking to you as an outpatient pediatric occupational therapist. My days are spent treating children with developmental disabilities. Many of these children have Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Down syndrome and other diagnosis that will require lifetime supports. Many are being raised by single parents and receiving Medicaid. These are individuals not yet on any waiting list, these families have no idea what lies ahead. Children with disabilities are not going away.

There needs to be an end to waiting lists for community residential and day and employment services. The state needs to partner with these individuals and their families, not work against them. Please support legislation to stop the waiting list and provide support to these families. Please stop making cuts to DDS 's funding.

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